

JALA PRASADANA – AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Water which is a vital environmental factor to all forms of life, plays a great role in socio-economic development of human population. There can be no state of positive health and well-being without safe water. Ideal drinking water should be devoid of micro-organisms known to be pathogenic.¹ Water which is *Nirgandha, Avyakta Rasa, Shuchi* and *Sheeta* is considered as safe to drink. *Acharya Sushruta* classifies *Jala* into two types; *Anthariksha Jala* and *Bhauma Jala*.² *Acharya Charaka* says only one type of *Jala* that is *Anthariksha Jala*.³ According to *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta*, *Anthariksha Jala* or *Aindra Jala* which falls from *Aakash* is considered as devoid of impurities and fit for drinking. Polluted water is known to have caused several epidemics of water-borne diseases in India.⁴ *Acharya Charaka* says *Jala* which has *Vikruta Gandha, Varna, Rasa* and *Sparsha* is not fit for drinking.⁵ *Acharyas* have mentioned various *Dravyas* used for *Jala Prasadana*. In this review article, various methods of *Jala Prasadana* and its importance has been discussed.

Key words – Water, *Dooshita Jala, Jala Prasadana*

Introduction

Water is one among the basic needs of human life. It is said that humans can survive for 5 weeks without food but not more than five days without water.⁶ The water which we consume should be clean and purified. Purified water is said to be colourless,

odourless and tasteless. Consumption of unpurified water would lead to many diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera etc.

A report by the United Nations says that more than three million people in the world die of water related diseases due to contaminated water each year,

including 1.2 million children. In India, over one lakh people die of water borne diseases annually. It is reported that groundwater in one-third of India's 600 districts is not fit for drinking as the concentration of fluoride, iron, salinity and arsenic exceeds the tolerance levels. About 65 million people have been suffering from fluorosis, a crippling disease due to a high amount of fluoride and five million are suffering from arsenicosis in West Bengal due to high amount of arsenic. A World Resources Report says: about 70% of India's water supply is seriously polluted with sewage effluents. The UN reported that India's water quality is poor, it ranks 120th among 122 nations in terms of quality of water available to its citizens. Water borne diseases like gastroenteritis, cholera etc erupt every year during summer and rainy seasons in India due to poor quality of drinking water and sanitation.⁷

Hence to maintain the health of the community, providing safe drinking water is of utmost important. Now a days there are many water purifiers available such as Ultra filtration, Ultraviolet purifiers, Reverse Osmosis

etc but it all has its own disadvantages.

UF water purifiers are capable of killing all the Bacteria, Viruses, cysts and other micro-organisms, where as it cannot remove the heavy metals and dissolved salts from the water. UV water purifiers on the other hand is also capable of eliminating micro-organisms only, but doesn't remove heavy metals, salts, chlorine etc. It is also costly and requires electricity. Since UV light is invisible, if the purifier stops working its difficult to identify, which results in deliver of impure water.

RO water purifiers are the best to treat hard water, removes dissolved materials but not much effective over micro-organisms. It is known to remove natural minerals such as iron, magnesium, calcium, sodium which are essential to human body, which inturn leads to mineral deficiency. As it makes water de-mineralized, it results in tastelessness and it is expensive too.

In Ayurveda, *Acharyas* have mentioned various *Dravyas* which can be used for water purification. There is a need for detail study of these *Dravyas* with respect to water

purification as it is less cost effective and is beneficial in providing safe water to the community.

Properties of water fit for drinking

In our classics, it is mentioned that *Aindra/Anthariksha Jala* ie; rain water of *Ashvayuja Maasa* is pure and is fit for drinking.

Acharya Sushruta opines *Jala* which is *Nirgandha, Avyakta Rasa, Trishnagna, Suchi, Sheeta* and *Laghu* is *Gunayukta Jala* ie; fit for drinking.⁸

Acharyas have also mentioned about *Hamsodaka Jala* which we get only in *Sharad Rutu* as one of the purest *Jala* and is fit for drinking. The water which is exposed to sunlight in the daytime and moonlight during night in *Sharad Rutu* wherein *Agastya Nakshatra* is seen which is known to purify the water is called *Hamsodaka*.⁹

Dooshita Jala- Water which is unfit for drinking

According to *Acharya Charaka*, the water which has *Vikruta Gandha, Varna, Rasa, Sparsha* and which has *Atikleda*, wherein the aquatic animals have left the water is considered as disease causing agent. He also mentions that river water which is vitiated by mud, insects, dirt etc causes all kinds of diseases.¹⁰

Acharya Vagbhata says *Jala* collected from resources having *Panka, Shaivala, Truna*, unexposed to sun, moon and air, which is *Ghana* and *Guru* is *Apriya Jala* ie; not fit for drinking.¹¹

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned about *Shad Doshas* of *Jala* as mentioned in Table 1.¹²

Dosha	Features
<i>Sparsha dosha</i>	<i>Kharata</i> (roughness), <i>Pichilata</i> (slimy), <i>Ushna</i> (hot)
<i>Rupa dosha</i>	<i>Panka</i> (sand), <i>Sikata</i> (stone), <i>Shaivala, Bahu varna</i>
<i>Rasa dosha</i>	<i>Vyakta Rasa</i> (any of the 6 Rasas)
<i>Gandha dosha</i>	<i>Anishta Gandha</i>
<i>Virya dosha</i>	<i>Trishna</i> (thirst), <i>Gourava</i> (heaviness), <i>Shula</i> (pain), <i>Kapha Praseka</i> (excessive secretion)
<i>Vipaka dosha</i>	<i>Chira Vipaka, Vishtambhi</i>

Effects of Dooshita Jalapana

Dooshita Jala ie; impure water if consumed leads to manifestation of various diseases. *Acharya Sushruta* mentions that if one consumes *Vikruta Jala* it would lead to *Swayathu, Pandu, Twak Dosh, Avipaaka, Shwasa, Kasa, Shoola* and *Gulma*.¹³

Bhavaprakasha mentions if *Dooshita Jala* is used for drinking, one would

suffer from *Trushna, Adhmana, Jwara, Kasa, Agnimandya* and *Kandu*.¹⁴

Jala Prasadana

Jala is one among the *Pancha Mahabhoota*. The synonyms of *Jala* are *Ambu, Vaari, Udaka, Neera, Amruta* etc. The *Jala* which falls from *Aakash* that is rain water is called as *Anthariksha Jala* or *Aindra Jala*. *Acharyas* consider *Anthariksha Jala* as *Pradhana* among all other *Jalas*. This *Anthariksha Jala* has *Avyakta Rasa*, it is like *Amruta, Jeevana, Tarpana, Dharana* and is indicated in *Tandra, Nidra* and *Daha Prashamana*.

When *Jala* is falling from *Aakash*, it comes in contact with *Chandra, Vaayu* and *Surya*. Later when it reaches the ground, depending upon *Desha* and *Kaala* its *Guna, Karma* changes and it becomes *Hita* or *Ahita Jala*. This *Divya Jala* which falls from *Aakash* has six *gunas*; *Sheeta, Shuchi, Shiva, Madhura, Vimala* and *Laghu*.¹⁵

Classification of Jala

Acharyas have classified *Jala* into different types as shown in Table 2.

Among *Anthariksha Jala, Dhaara Jala* is considered as *Pradhana* as it is *Laghu*. Among *Dhaara Jala, Ganga Jala* is considered as *Pradhana*. In the

absence of *Ganga Jala, Bhauma Jala* can be used.

<i>Acharyas</i>	Number of Jala	Types of Jala
<i>Sushruta</i>	4	<i>Dhaara</i> - 1. <i>Gaanga</i> 2. <i>Samudra Kaara</i> <i>Toushara</i> <i>Haima</i>
<i>Vagbhata</i>	8	<i>Kaup</i> <i>Saarasa</i> <i>Tadaga</i> <i>Chounitya</i> <i>Prasarvana</i> <i>Audbhida</i> <i>Vaapi</i> <i>Nadi</i>
<i>Bhava prakasha</i>	2	<i>Divya</i> <i>Bhauma</i>

In Ayurveda, importance is given to purification of *Jala* which is why our *Acharyas* have mentioned various methods of purification. *Acharya Sushruta* mentions about *Sapta Prasadana Dravyas* which can be used for purification of water. They are; *Kataka, Gomedaka, Bisagranthi, Saivalamula, Vastra, Muktha* and *Mani*.¹⁶

Acharya VrudhaVagbhata mentions about a *Bhasma* which consists of *Ajashrunji, Vishaala, Vishagni, Uttamarani, Phanijaka* and *Prativisha*. This *Bhasma* has to be mixed with *DooshitaJala* and filtered for many

times. Later this water has to be boiled by adding *Kalka* of *Sarala*, *Udicha*, *Manjishta*, *Rasna* and *Bakuchi*. By this the water becomes purified.¹⁷

He also mentions about *PaataladiBhasma* which can be used for water purification. It consists of *Paatala*, *Paaribhadra*, *Ashvakarna*, *Shamyaka* and *Shigru*. This has to be made into *Bhasma* form by frying the powders of these *Dravyas* in *MrutPatra*. By adding this *Bhasma* to the *VikrutaJala* it gets purified.¹⁸

In *Bhavaprakasha*, it is mentioned that *VikrutaJala* can be made fit for drinking by boiling, exposing to sunlight. Gold, silver, iron, stone or sand may be heated and dipped in water for seven times. Later it can be fragrancd by *Karpura*, flowers of *Jaati*, *Punnagæ* etc and filtered through thick cloth to remove small insects.¹⁹

Discussion

Water forms about 60% of our body weight. It plays a vital role in maintaining the health, at the same time impure water leads to many diseases. As the prevalence of water borne diseases is high in India, there is need of a safe, effective and affordable method of water purification. There are many

disadvantages of present water purifiers and are costly too. Ayurveda, the science of life has mentioned many *Dravyas* for purifying the water.

In one of the study conducted, wherein *Gomedaka* was used for purificatory purpose, it was found that *Gomedaka* had some effect on certain parameters of drinking water. *Gomedaka* was found to reduce Magnesium, Dissolved salts, Turbidity, Conductivity, P^H and Salinity in water where as increase in dissolved oxygen was seen.²⁰ Likewise, studies on other *Dravyas* mentioned is required to know the effect of these *Dravyas* as purifiers. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned about *Vastra*(cloth) for purification of water.

Thin white cotton clothes can be used to filter raw water containing impurities such as insects, mud or dust particles. Filtration of suspended particles present in water can be achieved only to small extent. This type of filtration is not suitable for highly turbid water. It is most suitable for filtration of well water. Practice of cloth filtration is commonly seen in villages.

Other purificatory methods mentioned by *Bhavaprakasha* such as boiling,

exposure to sunlight etc has some effect in purifying water. Boiling water to 100 degree Celsius is known to kill all the pathogens and hence it is highly effective. Exposure of water to sunlight has moderate effect on pathogens and further studies has to be conducted.

Conclusion

With increase in population day by day, there is a demand for supply of safe and adequate drinking water to the community. Developing countries like India are still facing the challenge of supplying safe drinking water to the community. As there are references of Ancient water purificatory methods in Ayurveda, it is required to study their effect on water.

Unless there is supply of safe drinking water, there can be no state of good health in the community. Further studies has to be conducted to come to a conclusion about water purificatory methods in Ayurveda. Although many *Dravyashave* been mentioned for purpose of purification of water, the duration has not been mentioned. Researches in these aspects are yet to be conducted.

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